

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3045

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONGEN CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 3259

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, PINT, IN, VT

SUBJECT: VATICAN AND INDIA: NEW BISHOPS

REFS: NEW DELHI 17870, STATE 16545, CALCUTTA 3215

1. VATICAN OFFICAL ON FEBRUARY 28 TOLD US THAT DIFFICULTIES (CITED REFTELS) WITH INDIAN GOVERNMENT OVER THE NOMINATION OF NEW BISHOPS HAVE BEEN OVER-COME AND THAT THE VATICAN HAD QUIETLY NAMED SEVEN NEW BISHOPS. NEW BISHOPS WERE NAMED FOR DIOCESES OF ALLAHABAD, GUNTUR, AND JABALPUR. IN ADDITION, POPE NAMED FOUR BISHOPS OF NEWLY CREATED DIOCESES OF CUDDAPAH, HYDERABAD, ELURU, AND NALGONDA.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT VATICAN HAS NOT PRESSED GOI PUBLICLY ON THE ISSUE BUT THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT IT AUTHORIZED BISHOPS TO GO PUBLIC WITH IT. FIRST PUBLIC MENTION OF THE PROBLEM WHICH WE HAVE SEEN WAS INCLUDED IN AN ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN THE ITALIAN HIERARCHY ORGAN AVVENIRE ON FEBRUARY 20. IN INTERVIEW, BISHOP
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OF WNEYAWADA, MONSIGNOR JOSEPH THUMMA, STATES THAT THERE IS NEED FOR ADDITIONAL CATHOLIC BISHOPS IN INDIA AND POINTS TO EXISTING DIFFICULTIES CREATED BY WISH OF GOI "TO EXPRESS ITS APPROVAL OF NEW NOMINATIONS." BISHOP ALSO QUOTED AS EXPRESSING "HOPE THAT NEGOTIATIONS NOW IN COURSE WITH HOLY SEE WILL END SOON SATISFACTORILY."

BISHOP SAID THAT MATTER WAS NOT RAISED AT RECENT BOMBAY EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE. BISHOP ALSO ALLUDED TO A "NATIONALITY" PROBLEM BY SAYING THAT "PRESENTLY OF THE 100 INDIAN DIOCESES, ONLY FIVE ARE DIRECTED BY EUROPEAN BISHOPS."

3. COMMENT: IN LATE JANUARY VATICAN OFFICIAL, WHO HAD VISITED GOA AND NEW DELHI IN LATE 1976, IN CONFIRMING A CONTINUING DEADLOCK OVER THE ISSUE, ALSO TOLD US THAT PROBLEM WAS ORIGINALLY INSTIGATED THROUGH COLUSION OF DISGRUNTLED GOAN PRIESTS AND OVER-ZEALOUS ASSISTANTS OF PRIME MINISTER GHANDI, ACTING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CZECHOSLOVAK ADVISERS. HE ALSO TOLD US THAT VATICAN WAS APPROACHING ISSUE VERY CAUTIOUSLY AND PATIENTLY, ENDEAVORING IN THE FIRST INSTANCE TO DISCOVER DEGREE OF PRIME MINISTER'S COMMITMENT ON ISSUE AND HAD ACCORDINGLY ADOPTED LOW PUBLIC POSTURE HOPING THAT PRIME MINISTER'S COMMITMENT TO ADVISERS' COURSE OF ACTION WAS REVERSIBLE. WHILE WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER GOI HAS TACITLY APPROVED THE NEW NOMINATIONS, VATICAN SOURCE TOLD US THAT THE VATICAN HAD NOT YIELDED ON THE ISSUE BUT SIMPLY WENT AHEAD IN MAKING THE NOMINATIONS WITH ONLY SIMPLE PRENOTIFICATION TO THE GOI PRIOR TO PUBLICATION. BEAUDRY

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